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CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

U.S. Use of Tear Gas Could Violate Treaty, Critics Say

Nicholas Wade and Eric Schmitt, The New York Times, 5 April 2003, p. B13, www.nytimes.com

President Bush has authorized American military forces to use tear gas in Iraq, the Pentagon says, a development that some weapons experts say other countries might see as a breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Defense Department said tear gas, which has been issued to American troops, would be used only to save civilian lives and in accordance with the convention, ratified by the United States in 1997. But critics say any battlefield use of tear gas would violate the treaty, offend crucial allies, including Britain, and hand Saddam Hussein a possible pretext for using chemical weapons against the United States. These different views reflect a deliberate ambiguity in the Chemical Weapons Convention, which says that riot-control agents may not be used as a "method of warfare" but does not define this phrase. [[Click here for full text.](#)]

[Commentary] Chemical Hypocrites: As It Struggles to Justify Its Invasion, the US Is Getting Ready to Use Banned Weapons in Iraq

George Monbiot, The Guardian (London), 8 April 2003, p. 21, www.guardian.co.uk

When Saddam Hussein so pig-headedly failed to shower US troops with chemical weapons as they entered Iraq, thus depriving them of a retrospective justification for this war, the American generals explained that he would do so as soon as they crossed the "red line" around Baghdad. Beyond that point, the desperate dictator would lash out with every weapon he possessed. Well, the line has been crossed and re-crossed, and not a whiff of mustard gas or VX has so far been detected. This could mean one of three things: Saddam's command system may have broken down (he may be dead, or his troops might have failed to receive or respond to his orders); he is refraining, so far, from using chemical weapons; or he does not possess them. The Special Forces sent to seize Iraq's weapons of mass destruction have yet to find hard evidence at any of the 12 sites (identified by the Pentagon as the most likely places) they have examined so far. [[Click here for full text.](#)]



Russia Increases Funding to Clean up Old Chemical Arms Disposal Facilities

Interfax News Agency, Moscow, 10 Apr 2003; transcribed by BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union; accessed via Lexis-Nexis.

In 2003, Russia has nearly doubled the funds allocated for the cleanup and security of former chemical weapons destruction facilities. "In 2002, some R250m was allocated for these purposes, and this year the figure will be at least R420m," a source in the State Commission on Chemical Disarmament told Interfax on Thursday 10 April. Most of this work is being done at Khimprom (Volgograd), Kaprolaktam (Dzerzhinsk, Nizhniy Novgorod Region), Volgokhimprom (Chapayevsk, Samara Region), Khimprom (Novocheboksarsk) and the State Institute of Heavy Organic Synthesis (Shikhany, Saratov Region). These plants are used for destroying building components, materials and equipment, and for creating thermal disinfecting facilities and ecological control systems. Under the Chemical Weapons Convention, Russia is to complete the destruction of chemical weapons facilities by 29 August 2007. [Full text. No attachment.]

COOPERATIVE THREAT REDUCTION (CTR)

Russian Bombs Recycled into U.S. Nuclear Fuel

Linda Ashton, Associated Press, 10 April 2003; accessed via Lexis-Nexis.

Bomb-grade uranium that once armed Soviet weapons of mass destruction today is being recycled in Russia and the United States for use in commercial nuclear power plants. The "Megatons to Megawatts" program, a joint venture between the Bethesda, Md.-based USEC and the Russian Federation's TENEX, will have destroyed the equivalent of 20,000 nuclear warheads by the year 2013. "Nuclear warheads that were once aimed at American cities are today providing electricity for those cities," said Charles Yulish, a spokesman for USEC. "It's a nice irony." [\[Click here for full text.\]](#)

IRELAND: GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT

IRA Blamed for Talks Failure

Jason Beattie, The Scotsman, 11 April 2003, p. 2; accessed via Lexis-Nexis

An attempt to revive the Northern Ireland peace process was suspended amid bitterness and recrimination yesterday after Tony Blair said the IRA had made an inadequate commitment to peace. The Prime Minister cancelled his trip to Belfast and instead held crisis talks with Bertie Ahern, the Irish *Taoiseach* [Prime Minister], to discuss how to salvage hopes of restoring the Good Friday Agreement. British officials were last night negotiating with Gerry Adams, the leader of Sinn Fein, in an attempt to persuade the IRA to lay down the long-sought-after concessions. Blame was placed almost entirely on the republicans who had apparently raised eleventh hour objections to details in the statement setting out the terms of disarmament. "If there isn't clarity, there isn't confidence and if there isn't confidence, there isn't a deal," Mr. Blair said after meeting the *Taoiseach*. The postponement of an agreement - trailed as the most important step in securing the peace process since the Good Friday Agreement five years ago - is a major setback for Mr. Blair who had roped in the help of the United States president, George Bush, earlier this week to help seal a deal. The embarrassment is particularly acute as the president and the Prime Minister had held up the "success" of the peace process as a model for resolving other conflicts, notably the Middle East. David Trimble, the Ulster Unionist leader, said the peace process could not be "held to ransom" by Sinn Fein and the IRA's unwillingness to live up to their responsibility. "Society cannot be held to ransom because republicans cannot deliver on their commitments," he said. Mitchel McLaughlin, Sinn Fein's national chairman, admitted the main problems were policing and justice, as well as the issue of sanctions. He said the absence of any clear commitment from unionists that they would not collapse the institutions again was another major issue. Despite the cancellation of the summit, Mr. Ahern remained optimistic the outstanding impediments could be removed. "There are difficulties still to be resolved, we have time to resolve them. It is a time for people to keep just calm and cool and try to resolve them," he said. A Downing Street spokesman said: "Continuing discussions between the governments and pro-agreement parties have led the governments to conclude that sufficient progress has not yet been made which would allow the holding of a meeting between the Prime Minister, the *Taoiseach* and the parties." [Full text. No attachment.]





IRA Denies Blame for Peace Accord Impasse

Shawn Pogatchnik, Associated Press Online, 10 April 2003; accessed via Lexis-Nexis.

Dashing expectations of a breakthrough, Britain and Ireland withheld their new Northern Ireland peace plans Thursday after failing to get long-sought commitments from the Irish Republican Army, government aides said. Sinn Fein party leader Gerry Adams, a reputed IRA chief, insisted the outlawed group was not responsible for the deadlock. Thursday, the fifth anniversary of the U.S.-brokered Good Friday accord, was the two governments' target date for announcing the new plans. The impasse, typical of the suspicion and recrimination that have dogged peacemaking efforts in this British territory for a decade, raised doubts about a planned May 29 election for the moribund Northern Ireland legislature. Britain already postponed the vote once. [\[Click here for full text.\]](#)

NONPROLIFERATION TREATY (NPT)

[Commentary] North Korea's Withdrawal From the NPT: A Reality Check

Jean du Preez and William Potter, Center for Nonproliferation Studies, 9 April 2003, <http://cns.miis.edu/>

April 10 marks a significant event in the history of the 32-year-old nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Since its entry into force in 1970, the NPT has grown to 188 members and become the most widely subscribed to international treaty in history. That number will decline by one when North Korea's withdrawal from the treaty becomes effective on 10 April 2003. This will be the first time a state has left the treaty. The significance of North Korea's withdrawal will be measured by its impact on the validity of the NPT and the nuclear nonproliferation regime and on peace and security in the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia. North Korea's withdrawal could trigger further defections from the treaty and cause other states in the region to pursue nuclear weapons of their own. Of equal concern is the potential for North Korea to sell weapons-grade fissile material or nuclear weapons themselves to other states and non-state actors, including terrorist groups. [\[Click here for full text.\]](#)

Following U.N. Discussion, North Korea Says Strong Military Deterrent Is Only Way to Avoid War

Christopher Tochia, Associated Press, 10 April 2003; accessed via Lexis-Nexis.

North Korea said the Iraq war proved the need for it to maintain a strong military deterrent against the United States, as the communist nation's withdrawal from the global nuclear arms control treaty officially took effect Thursday. The North's comments came a day after U.N. Security Council members said they were worried by North Korea's standoff with Washington, but refused to condemn it for pulling out of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. China and Russia had opposed condemning Pyongyang. [\[Click here for full text.\]](#)





Security Council Averts Standoff on North Korea Nuclear Issue

Felicity Barringer, The New York Times, 10 April 2003, p. B11, www.nytimes.com

The Security Council today stepped back from a potential standoff over North Korea's withdrawal from the treaty that prohibits it from developing nuclear weapons, as China signaled its openness to "promote political dialogue" and the United States eased off its pursuit of a formal statement of condemnation. Both the Chinese and American actions represented discreet pullbacks from earlier positions taken after the International Atomic Energy Agency referred the question of North Korea's nuclear program to the Security Council two months ago. [\[Click here for full text.\]](#)

North Korea Quits Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

Andrew Ward, Financial Times (London), 11 April 2003, p. 11; accessed via Lexis-Nexis.

North Korea became the first country to withdraw from the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) yesterday, but the international community appeared no closer to agreeing a united response to the communist state's suspected nuclear weapons program. The withdrawal, which followed a 90-day notice period since Pyongyang announced its intention to quit in January, dealt a blow to the 187-nation arms-control pact and posed a challenge to US president George W. Bush's drive to stop "rogue" states acquiring weapons of mass destruction. Washington wanted the UN Security Council to issue a statement condemning North Korea's withdrawal from the NPT, but the move was blocked by China and Russia at a Council meeting in New York on Wednesday. The disagreement dashed hopes that the Council could heal its bitter divisions over Iraq by forging a united approach towards North Korea. Beijing and Moscow, traditional allies of Pyongyang and permanent Council members, argued that a statement would increase tensions on the divided Korean peninsula rather than help solve the crisis. North Korea, named by the US alongside Iraq as part of an "axis of evil", warned in advance that it would consider Security Council action a "prelude to war". Washington attempted to play down its differences with Beijing and Moscow, insisting there was international "unanimity" behind the goal of keeping the Korean peninsula free from nuclear weapons. However, divisions within the US government about policy towards North Korea have been exposed this week by the contrasting statements of different US officials. While John Negroponte, US ambassador to the UN, said Washington sought a "peaceful and diplomatic" solution to its dispute with Pyongyang, John Bolton, under-secretary of state for arms control, urged North Korea and other countries seeking weapons of mass destruction to "draw the appropriate lesson from Iraq". Mr. Bolton's comment seemed likely to deepen North Korea's fear that it could be the next target of US military action. Earlier this week, North Korea said that Iraq's experience showed that the only way to protect against attack by the US was to develop a powerful military deterrent. "Everyone is waiting to see what conclusion North Korea draws from war in Iraq," said Paik Jin-hyun, professor of international relations at Seoul National University. "Will they decide they must accelerate their nuclear program to make it too dangerous for the US to attack? Or will they decide it is safer to compromise with Washington?" [Full text. No attachment.]

Minister Says Russia to Continue Nuclear Cooperation with Iran

ITAR-TASS (Moscow), 11 April 2003; in FBIS, FBIS Document ID CEP20030411000010.

Visiting Atomic Energy Minister Alexander Rumyantsev played down US fears that Russian construction of a nuclear power plant in Iran may trigger proliferation and made it clear Moscow will go on with the project in Busherrh. Rumyantsev, who met US Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton, told Tass he assured him that "everything will be done in strict compliance with international norms and agreements". "Therefore, our information on cooperation with Iran was apprehended with understanding that we do not violate any international commitments", the minister said. Rumyantsev said Bolton informed him that G-8 senior officials agreed in Paris on the implementation of the initiative to grant Russia 20 billion US dollars in ten years for enhancing nuclear safety. Rumyantsev, who also met US Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham, said Russian-US cooperation in nuclear security has a strategic character and will preserve the existing high pace of development. "This is the main result of the visit", the minister said. He added he had discussed with Abraham the utilization of excessive weapon-grade plutonium, safety of radioactive materials, accounting, control and protection of nuclear materials. The consultations were constructive, according to Rumyantsev. [Full text. No attachment.]





STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE REDUCTIONS TREATY

Duma Expected to Ratify US Arms Treaty

Associated Press, 8 April 2003; in Russia Journal, www.russiajournal.com/

Responding to a call from President Vladimir Putin, senior Russian lawmakers said Tuesday that the parliament would soon consider ratification of a pivotal nuclear arms reduction with the United States that had been delayed over the war in Iraq. On Saturday, Putin urged lawmakers to ratify the treaty, despite the "unfavorable background" created by the war in Iraq. The statement came as the latest signal of Moscow softening its criticism of the war in Iraq in an apparent effort to avoid further damage to its relations with Washington. The lower house of parliament, the State Duma, had been expected to take up debate on the Treaty of Moscow last month, but it indefinitely postponed a ratification vote over the U.S.-led attack on Iraq. [\[Click here for full text.\]](#)

UNMOVIC/IRAQ

ElBaradei: U.N. Must Verify Iraqi Weapons Tests

Reuters, 8 April 2003; in Washington Post, www.washingtonpost.com

United Nations weapons inspectors must be asked to verify any test results indicating the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, the head of the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency said on Tuesday. Among a number of finds of suspect chemicals by U.S. forces in Iraq were 14 barrels discovered at an Iraqi military training camp on Sunday. "Any test results would have to be verified by the United Nations weapons inspectors to generate the required credibility," Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, told Reuters through a spokesman. [Full text. No attachment.]





Russian Bombs Recycled into U.S. Nuclear Fuel

Linda Ashton, Associated Press, 10 April 2003; accessed via Lexis-Nexis

Bomb-grade uranium that once armed Soviet weapons of mass destruction today is being recycled in Russia and the United States for use in commercial nuclear power plants.

The "Megatons to Megawatts" program, a joint venture between the Bethesda, Md.-based USEC and the Russian Federation's TENEX, will have destroyed the equivalent of 20,000 nuclear warheads by the year 2013.

"Nuclear warheads that were once aimed at American cities are today providing electricity for those cities," said Charles Yulish, a spokesman for USEC. "It's a nice irony."

Since 1995, most of the 104 nuclear power plants in the United States have at some point used fuel rods made with Russia's recycled uranium. The Northwest's only nuclear power plant - Columbia Generating Station - is among them.

"We've got about 16 warheads' worth of material on hand or in the reactor," said Larry Linik, an nuclear engineer at the 1,200-megawatt Columbia Generating Station owned by Energy Northwest.

The 10-year-old Megatons to Megawatts nuclear-nonproliferation agreement grew out of the 1991 Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, which has resulted in the destruction of thousands of nuclear warheads, missiles and launchers in the former Soviet Union.

The 20-year agreement calls for the conversion of 500 metric tons of highly enriched, or weapons-grade uranium from dismantled Soviet warheads to low-enriched uranium for fuel to generate electricity.

The commercial contract between USEC and TENEX was signed in 1994. The first shipment of low-enriched uranium arrived in the United States in 1995.

Uranium is a natural element that comes out of the ground. It's about as common as tin and 500 times more common than gold.

Natural uranium is made up of three forms or isotopes - about 99 percent U-238, less than 1 percent U-235 and less than 0.1 percent U-234.

U-235 is the fissionable form, which means the nuclei of the atoms can be split to generate energy.

Enrichment increases the proportion of fissionable U-235. Low-enriched uranium is composed of 5 percent U-235 or less. High-enriched uranium can have U-235 in the upper 90-percent range.

Once the uranium is diluted from high-enriched to low-enriched, it can be used to create heat but not for bombs.

"It cannot blow up physically like a nuclear device," Linik said.

During the Cold War, both the United States and the Soviet Union amassed vast numbers of nuclear weapons under the theory of mutually assured destruction.

The U.S. Department of Energy's Hanford nuclear reservation was part of the Cold War arms buildup, producing plutonium for the nation's nuclear arsenal.

Since the Cold War ended, a number of bilateral anti-nuclear pacts have been signed, with both countries pledging reductions of stockpiled weapons.





Since Megatons to Megawatts began, the equivalent of 7,000 Russian nuclear warheads have been recycled into power plant fuel, Yulish said.

"That material is gone," he said. "It isn't a matter of safeguarding it. It doesn't exist. It's fuel."

The program helps diminish the opportunities for terrorists to obtain stockpiled bomb-grade uranium, Yulish said.

It's also a jobs program in Russia that has helped keep scientists and workers from departing for nuclear-wannabe countries and sharing their expertise, Yulish said.

"When we finish, we will have destroyed the equivalent of 20,000 nuclear warheads," Yulish said. "That ain't all there is, but it's pretty impressive when you want to keep this stuff out of the reach of terrorists."

USEC so far has purchased about \$3.5 billion in Russian low-enriched uranium, about half of its annual supply. The remainder is produced domestically by USEC in Paducah, Ky.

Russia dilutes the uranium, ships it to the United States where additional conversion work is done, and then it's sent on to a fabricator to make nuclear fuel assemblies, or bundles of fuel rods.

At Columbia Generating Station, 292 fresh fuel assemblies will be loaded into the reactor core next month during the biannual refueling outage. Workers there are now inspecting the fuel assemblies, which are then stored underwater before being transferred to the reactor core.

A single assembly costs close to \$200,000.

Columbia Generating Station is located on leased land at Hanford nuclear reservation in south-central Washington but is not part of the U.S. Department of Energy. The electricity produced at the nuclear power plant is sold by Bonneville Power Administration, a federal power marketing agency in Portland, Ore.





IRA Denies Blame for Peace Accord Impasse

Shawn Pogatchnik, Associated Press Online, 10 April 2003; accessed via Lexis-Nexis

Dashing expectations of a breakthrough, Britain and Ireland withheld their new Northern Ireland peace plans Thursday after failing to get long-sought commitments from the Irish Republican Army, government aides said.

Sinn Fein party leader Gerry Adams, a reputed IRA chief, insisted the outlawed group was not responsible for the deadlock.

Thursday, the fifth anniversary of the U.S.-brokered Good Friday accord, was the two governments' target date for announcing the new plans.

The impasse, typical of the suspicion and recrimination that have dogged peacemaking efforts in this British territory for a decade, raised doubts about a planned May 29 election for the moribund Northern Ireland legislature. Britain already postponed the vote once.

Adams, whose party is linked with the IRA, demanded that Britain and Ireland "leave the IRA out" of current arguments and immediately publish the full text of their plans, which have been in the works since October and widely leaked.

They include guarantees of freedom for IRA fugitives, British military cutbacks, justice reforms and other moves designed to entice the IRA into resuming disarmament and abandoning all hostile activities. If the IRA made those commitments, Britain would seek to revive Northern Ireland's mothballed Catholic-Protestant administration, the central achievement of the 1998 deal.

But the environment for a deal evaporated in morning telephone negotiations involving Adams and the British and Irish prime ministers, Tony Blair and Bertie Ahern.

Blair and Ahern were about to fly to Hillsborough Castle near Belfast to unveil the document. Earlier this week at the castle, they joined President Bush in appealing for the IRA to fade away and Sinn Fein to accept the legitimacy of Northern Ireland's police.

The prime ministers canceled Thursday's event because the proposed text of an IRA statement - discussed Wednesday during face-to-face meetings in Belfast between Adams and Blair's chief of staff, Jonathan Powell - was politically inadequate, a British government official said on condition of anonymity.

Ahern instead flew to London to discuss the impasse with Blair. After a 90-minute meeting, the two premiers agreed they could be in Hillsborough publishing their plans Friday - but only if Sinn Fein and the IRA put their cards on the negotiating table, too.

"We'll be in contact with the parties overnight," Blair said. "We've got to make sure that people understand the time is urgent, and I hope even at this late stage the difficulties can be ironed out and dealt with."

Ahern said the impasse was "resolvable."

"Hopefully we can move on," he said. "If not, it won't be our fault."

The other three parties in Northern Ireland's suspended administration said people already had a good idea of what Britain wanted to do but no clue about IRA intentions.

Adams' moderate Catholic rival, Social Democratic and Labor Party leader Mark Durkan, said leaders of the Sinn Fein-IRA movement "cannot evade their share of the blame."





Durkan chided Sinn Fein for continuing to boycott civilian boards overseeing the reform of Northern Ireland's mostly Protestant police force, an issue fundamental to promoting stability for the territory's 1.7 million people.

David Trimble, leader of the major Protestant party, the Ulster Unionists, accused Sinn Fein and IRA leaders of holding Northern Ireland hostage for ransom.

Trimble and Durkan were joint leaders of the crisis-prone coalition, which Britain shut down in October for the third time in three years.

Police that month uncovered evidence the IRA was using Sinn Fein's access to power to gather intelligence on potential targets. Four people, including the senior Sinn Fein legislative aide, were charged with stealing documents of use to the IRA.

That was too much for the Ulster Unionists, who in 1999 agreed to share power with Sinn Fein on condition the IRA disarmed fully, as the Good Friday agreement envisaged.

Trimble said his party would return to the Cabinet table with Sinn Fein only if Irish republicans agree "to forswear violence, to wind up their paramilitary wing and to complete the process of disarmament."

Blair, Ahern and Bush broadly endorsed Trimble's position in a joint statement Tuesday.

Blair and Ahern also reportedly want to tie Sinn Fein's right to hold office to the IRA's future good behavior - an idea Sinn Fein chairman Mitchel McLaughlin called "a deal-breaker."

The current system has required the entire administration to be mothballed whenever Ulster Unionist-Sinn Fein tensions flared over alleged IRA activities.





Following U.N. Discussion, North Korea Says Strong Military Deterrent Is Only Way to Avoid War

Christopher Tochia, Associated Press, 10 April 2003; accessed via Lexis-Nexis

North Korea said the Iraq war proved the need for it to maintain a strong military deterrent against the United States, as the communist nation's withdrawal from the global nuclear arms control treaty officially took effect Thursday.

The North's comments came a day after U.N. Security Council members said they were worried by North Korea's standoff with Washington, but refused to condemn it for pulling out of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. China and Russia had opposed condemning Pyongyang.

Drawing parallels with the U.S. showdown with Iraq, North Korea said that bowing to demands to abandon its suspected nuclear weapons development would lead to inspections and disarmament, setting the stage for a U.S. invasion.

"The Iraqi war launched by the U.S. pre-emptive attack clearly proves that a war can be prevented and the security of the country and the nation can be ensured only when one has physical deterrent force," said KCNA, the North's state-run news agency. It did not specifically refer to nuclear weapons as a deterrent.

The withdrawal from the nuclear arms control treaty officially took effect Thursday, three months after the North announced it was pulling out. In a similar standoff a decade ago, North Korea announced its withdrawal from the treaty but suspended its decision just before the 90-day notice period lapsed.

Pyongyang and Washington negotiated an energy deal that ended the earlier crisis, though a solution to the current standoff could be more difficult because U.S. officials have taken a harder line this time. They have refused North Korean appeals for direct talks, saying they will not give into blackmail and that other countries must be involved in any solution.

North Korea has said it would ignore any censure by the United Nations, and that economic sanctions - a measure that the Security Council could eventually consider - would constitute a declaration of war.

"The U.N. Security Council discussion of the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula itself is a prelude to war," said North Korea's Pyongyang Radio. North Korea has issued similar warnings in the past, and belligerence is a trademark of its statements.

The radio, monitored by South Korea's Yonhap news agency, called U.S. efforts to discuss the nuclear dispute at the council "a serious provocation, rupturing efforts for dialogue and spiking tension on the Korean Peninsula."

North Korea has never said that it is developing nuclear weapons, though the United States says it already has one or two atomic bombs. Washington says it has no plans to invade North Korea and seeks a peaceful solution to the nuclear problem, but has not ruled out a military option.

Washington wants the problem to be addressed in a multilateral forum including Russia, China, Japan and South Korea.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov held talks on the nuclear issue Thursday with South Korean officials in Seoul. Moscow was once a close ally of North Korea, though the friendship faded after the end of the Cold War.

"Solution of the North Korea problem presupposes that Pyongyang returns to all the international non-proliferation regimes and puts its sites under IAEA control, having receiving in return a guarantee of its security, sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as no attacks," Russia's Interfax news agency quoted Ivanov as saying.

The IAEA is the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. nuclear watchdog.





WEEKLY TREATY REVIEW

7 April 2003 to 11 April 2003

The standoff flared in October when U.S. officials said North Korea admitted it had a clandestine nuclear program in violation of a 1994 agreement with the United States.

Washington and its allies suspended fuel shipments promised under the 1994 deal, and Pyongyang retaliated by expelling U.N. monitors, taking steps to restart frozen facilities capable of making nuclear bombs and withdrawing from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

Reconciliation efforts between the two Koreas have suffered because of the nuclear standoff. Cabinet-level talks between the two sides did not take place as scheduled this week, and other joint projects have been postponed.

On Thursday, North Korea described the South Korean National Assembly as a "group of warmongers," in part because of its decision to approve the dispatch of non-combat troops to support the U.S.-led campaign in Iraq.

